

Remarks Announcing the Presidents' Summit for America's Future January 24, 1997

The President. I thank the Vice President and the First Lady for their remarks. Obviously, I am delighted to have President Bush, General Powell, and Secretary Cisneros back. Henry's only been off the payroll a day or two. [Laughter] I didn't really know if he'd come. [Laughter]

I thank so many people here who have advocated national service and citizen service of various kinds for a long time. Especially I'd like to acknowledge, in addition to Harris Wofford and Bob Goodwin, Eli Segal and Ray Chambers; Al From with the Democratic Leadership Council; Charles Moskos, the national scholar of citizen service, who was for all this years before the rest of us knew it was an issue. Thank you, sir, for all your lifetime of work devoted to the proposition that the American people can forge their own destiny and solve their own problems. We thank you.

This is an extraordinary collection of Americans who have gathered here, not only on the stage but out here in the room, to advance the cause of citizen service. Much of the work of America cannot be done by government. Much other work cannot be done by government alone. The solution must be the American people through voluntary service to others. The challenges we face today, especially those that face our children, require something of all of us, parents, religious and community groups, business, labor organizations, schools, teachers, our great national civic and service organizations, every citizen.

One of my proudest moments as President was signing the bill creating the Corporation for National Service and AmeriCorps. During the last 3 years, about 50,000 Americans have earned aid for college by serving in their communities, doing real work to address critical problems, cleaning up rivers, working with the police to make the streets safe, helping children learn to read, and doing many, many more things in every State in the country.

These AmeriCorps members and even larger numbers of Senior Service Corps and student volunteers have really helped to revive the spirit of service in America. I noticed just a few days before the Inauguration the publication of a na-

tional poll—I can mention that now and you think I have no self-interest, you see—[laughter]—the publication of a national poll that said that young people are serving in their communities in far higher percentages than just a few years ago.

I think this is a culmination of years and years of effort. When President Bush held this office, he understood that so much of what is good in America has to be done and is being done by people who are outside Washington and outside the Federal Government. And we share his hope that by holding up examples of ordinary Americans engaged in extraordinary service, by holding up those thousand points of light, they will grow by the power of their example into millions of points of light. And we thank you for that.

Citizen service belongs to no party, no ideology. It is an American idea which every American should embrace. Today I am pleased to announce that we are taking an important step to give more Americans the opportunity to fulfill that promise. On April 27th in Philadelphia, with the support and leadership of the Corporation for National Service, the Points of Light Foundation, General Colin Powell, and Secretary Henry Cisneros, President Bush and I will convene the first Presidents' summit on citizen service. Our goal is to mobilize America's citizen power in a united effort to solve our common problems, especially those that threaten our young people.

Leaders from a broad spectrum will come with commitments in hand, concrete pledges of support, and volunteers to solve their local problems. In preparation for the summit some of our most prominent corporations and service organizations have already stepped forward. Big Brothers-Big Sisters has pledged to double their mentoring relations, matching 200,000 deserving young people with caring adults through the year 2000. And they have pledged to compound their efforts by having these adult volunteers actually do other citizen service projects with the young people they mentor. They not only will be serving the young but calling on the young to serve. Lens Crafters will provide one million needy Americans, especially children,

with free vision care by the year 2003. Columbia HCA, a leading health care company, has committed to immunize one million children through their health care facilities by the year 2000. And that is just the beginning.

I am delighted that General Colin Powell, who has served our country in so very many ways, has agreed to serve once again, this time as general chair of the summit. General, we're grateful that you're joining us. And I remember well when you had your retirement ceremony, you said that you were going to devote more of your life to helping young people to have better lives and better futures. There is nothing—nothing—you could do that would have a bigger impact on that goal than this. And we are very grateful to you, sir.

All of you know that I believe Henry Cisneros is the finest HUD Secretary who ever served our country. He had a special way of getting people to take responsibility for their own lives and of generating real interpersonal human contacts in places where they had been too long absent. He just has a great new leadership job at Univision, and I am very grateful that he was willing to take substantial time out of an already very busy schedule in a new and fulfilling, in some ways more rewarding life—[*laughter*—to do what I know he loves best, which is to help people realize their own promise. Thank you, Henry, for doing this.

Finally, let me say I am deeply honored to be embarking on this joint venture with President Bush. As far as I know, there's not much of a precedent for this sort of thing, at least in recent history, but there should be. It must be true that the things which unite us as citizens are bigger than any one person, one party, one election, or one ideology. They can only be solved if we come together in partnership to lift each other up, a person at a time, a family at a time, a neighborhood at a time, a school at a time.

The organizers of this effort have wisely chosen Philadelphia as the site of the summit, for the reasons that the Vice President said. I'm reminded at the close of the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin made an observation about a design of the Sun that was hanging low on the horizon in the chair that General Washington sat in to preside over the Convention. And after the Constitutional Convention was over, he said there had been a lot of speculation about whether it was a rising or a setting

Sun; having seen the Constitution he could say that it was definitely a rising Sun. I believe we can look at this assemblage today, look forward to Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and say this is a rising Sun.

I thank all of you. I thank especially those who are here on this platform. And I'd like to ask all of you to join me as we hear from our speakers. First, President Bush, to be followed by General Powell and Henry Cisneros.

Mr. President, welcome back.

[*At this point, former President George Bush, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (ret.), and former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry G. Cisneros made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, let me again thank President Bush and General Powell and Secretary Cisneros and all the rest of you for being here; especially the Members of Congress, members of the administration, the mayors, and others who are here.

We are going to adjourn now and have a reception. But as we leave I'd like to just ask that we keep in mind the last point that Secretary Cisneros made. I imagine that Ray Chambers was a happy and successful man before he decided to give his whole life over to other people's welfare. But I can't imagine that he emanated the glow that he does today that we all see and that you see in the lives of other people who give.

And I guess—you know, our wealth and power are very important in America, and they must be maintained. But the pursuit of happiness involves more. And it really is true that in giving, we receive. So if we give a lot, we'll get a lot, and our country will enter this new century in wonderful, wonderful shape.

Thank you all, and God bless you. We're adjourned.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Harris Wofford, Chief Executive Officer, and Eli Segal, board member, Corporation for National and Community Service; Robert F. Goodwin, president, Points of Light Foundation; Raymond G. Chambers, president, Amerlior Foundation; Al From, president, Democratic Leadership Council; and Charles C. Moskos, professor of sociology, Northwestern University.

The President's Radio Address January 25, 1997

Good morning. Today I'm pleased to announce a major new step toward protecting the health and safety of all Americans, especially our children.

Almost a week ago, in my Inaugural Address, I told the American people that we must lead our country into the 21st century with the American dream alive for all our children, with the American promise of a more perfect Union a reality for all our people, with the light of our freedom illuminating all the world.

I believe we will make this vision real by doing what we've always done in moments of great change—holding fast to our enduring values. Central among these is the belief that we work tirelessly to make our families stronger and our children safer. Nothing is more important to meeting this goal than seeing to it that Americans live in a world with clean air, safe food, pure water. Hard-working American parents deserve the peace of mind that comes from knowing that the meal they set before their children is safe.

That's why I was so concerned by what happened in Washington State and in two other Western States this fall. Apple juice contaminated with a deadly strain of *E. coli* bacteria reached supermarket shelves. More than a dozen children, some as young as 2, were hospitalized, and one child died.

I'm sure just about every parent in America remembers what *E. coli* can do. Four years ago this month, tragedy struck hundreds of families in the Western United States when they took their children to fast-food restaurants that served them hamburgers tainted by the *E. coli* bacteria. Five hundred people became ill, some of them severely, and four children lost their lives.

Our administration has made it a top priority to protect the health and safety of all Americans. I signed into law legislation to keep harmful pesticides off our fruits and vegetables and legislation that keeps our drinking water safe and pure. We put in place strong new protections to ensure that seafood is safe. And last summer we announced steps to modernize our meat and poultry food safety system for the first time in 90 years. These new safety rules will begin to take effect next week. From now on, all meat

and poultry plants will be required to test for *E. coli*.

We have built a solid foundation for the health of America's families. But clearly we must do more. No parent should have to think twice about the juice that they pour their children at breakfast or a hamburger ordered during dinner out. That's why today I'm announcing new steps to use cutting-edge technology to keep our food safe and to protect our children from deadly bacteria. We must continue to modernize the food safety system put in place at the dawn of the 20th century so that it can meet the demands of the 21st century.

First, we will put in place a nationwide early warning system for food-borne illness. Right now the Centers for Disease Control, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Agriculture Department sponsor five centers across the country whose mission is to post a lookout for food-borne diseases like *E. coli* bacteria and salmonella. Working with State and local governments, these sentinel sites in California, Oregon, Minnesota, Georgia, and Connecticut actively track outbreaks of illnesses caused by contaminated food. Today I'm announcing we'll increase the number of these sites from five to eight and link them to other State health agencies. This expanded early warning system will enable us to catch outbreaks sooner and give us the data we need to help us prevent outbreaks from happening in the first place.

Second, we will see to it that the early warning system uses state-of-the-art technology to keep our food safe. We'll increase the number of expert disease detectives to investigate and control food-borne disease outbreaks. We will give these experts the technology to use sophisticated new DNA fingerprinting methods to trace dangerous bacteria to their source. We will create a permanent DNA fingerprint library so we can immediately recognize an illness if it reappears. And we will use advance communication networks to speed outbreak information to hospitals and public health agencies all around America.

Third, I'm directing Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman, Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala, and the Administrator